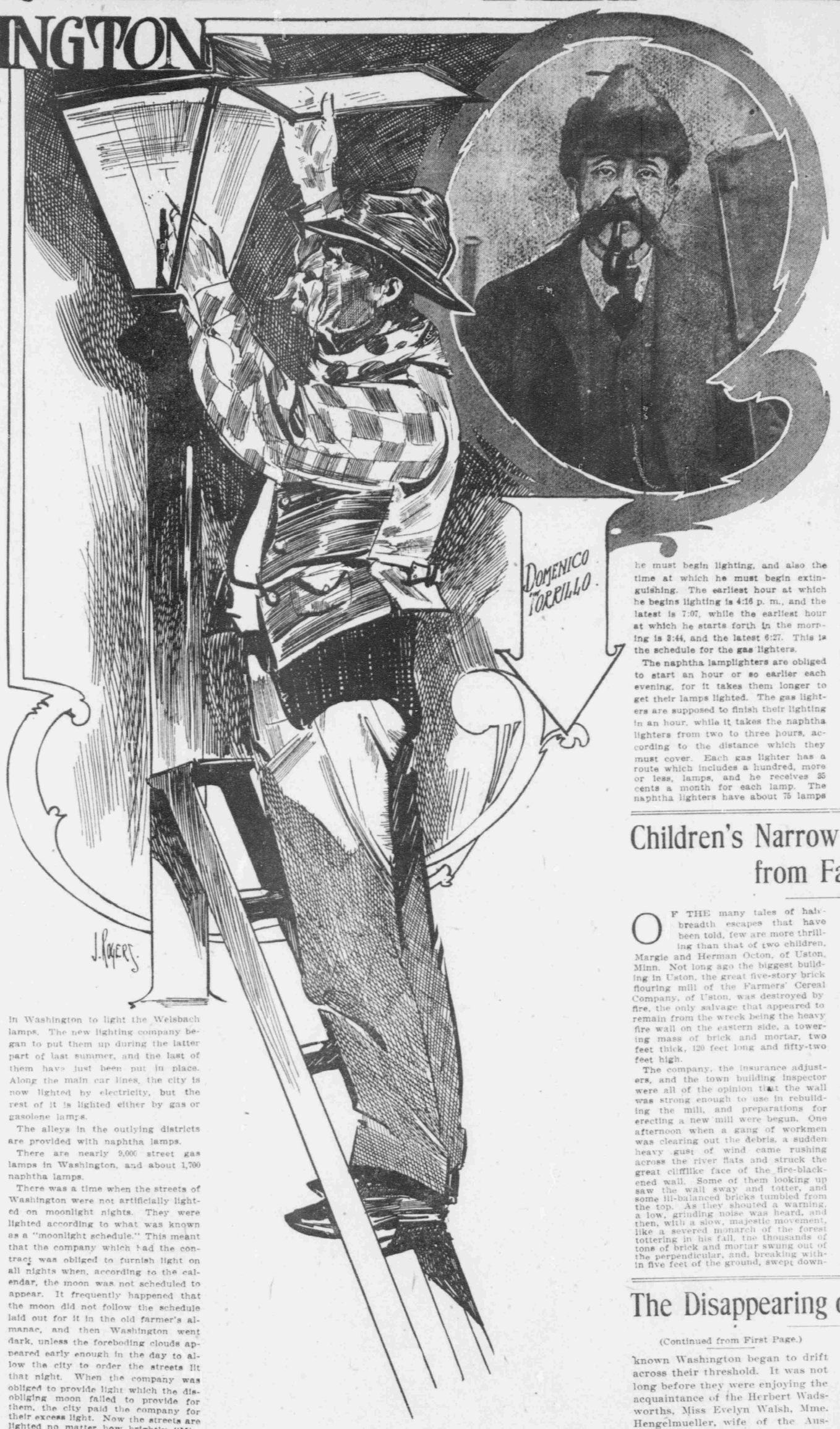
HUMAN FIREFLIES WHO FLIT NIGHTLY ABOUT WASHINGTON



Facts About Lamplighters And Street Lamps of City

Number of gas lamps, about 9,000; naphtha lamps, 1,700.
Number of lamplighters in District, 102.
Three-fourths of lamplighters Italians from same locality.
Eighty work for gas company; 22 for gasolene company.
Oldest lamplighter in city, Domenico Torrillo, aged sixty.
Followed his calling for twenty-four years, ten of them in Washington.
Lights 177 lamps nightly, with aid of young son.
Gets 35 cents a month for each lamp.
Monthly income, $61.95; sum earned yearly, $743.40.

Gas lamplighters' pay, 35 cents a month a lamp.
Each lights about 100 lamps, on an average.
Naphtha lamplighters' pay, from 40 to 65 cents.
Each lights about 75 lamps.
Total year's pay for all the gas lamplighters, $37,800.
Total year's pay for all the naphtha lamplighters, on 50 cent average, $10,200.

WASHINGTON is still practically a gas-lighted city. Although the electric light was invented nearly a generation ago, the gas light has not been replaced by the more modern method of lighting, and over three-fourths of the streets of this city are still lighted by gas. The day will probably come here as it has already come in many other cities of the country, when the entire city will be lighted at night by the turn or two of a switch. When that day does come, it will mean the passing away of one of the most picturesque of our manifold forms of modern labor. It will mean the passing away of the welcome street lamplighter.

Just at the hour of gloaming, when dark shadows begin to make bushes assume fantastic shapes of strange and unknown animals and when man turns from his labor of the day to seek the quiet repose of his home, the lamplighter comes to light for us our way along the darkening highways and byways of the blackening city. An ever welcome arrival is this scatterer of gloomy night—welcome to all except those who prefer the protecting cover of darkness so that they may carry on their business of plunder and lawlessness undaunted and unafraid.

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Never Minds the Weather.

In winter and summer alike, often in the blinding snow or the driving rain, the pelting hail, and the biting north wind, does this faithful guardian and protector of our homes make his daily rounds. On cold gray winter days, when the heavy snow clouds gather early in the sky and when the thick, fat white snowflakes begin to fall toward evening, the children sit at the window and watch for the lamplighter. At last he comes hurrying up the street with his little ladder thrown over his shoulder and his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets. The lamp is lighted, and the actual world of brick houses and dull gray clouds is at once transformed into a fairyland, were lights gleam and flicker through the darkness of the overarching dome of blackness.

The patriarch of the lamplighters in the city of Washington is Domenico Torrillo, of 1705 P street northwest. He is a well-known figure in the Northwestern section of the city, and he may be seen any day, walking briskly along with his little ladder over his shoulder and his long meerschaum pipe in his mouth, for in spite of his hurry, he can enjoy his smoke as he goes along. His long flowing moustachios hang far down on either side of his favorite pipe.

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City's First White Lamplighter.

Domenico has been in the lamplighting business longer than any other man in Washington, and he was one of the first white men to take up the work in this city. He has been lighting lamps in Washington for the last ten years, and before he came here, he was engaged in the same work in Long Island City for fourteen years. Domenico is now sixty years of age, but he looks as strong and as hearty as a man of forty. He has been in America twenty-six years, having come to this country from Pietrarcra, near Naples, Italy. He came to America to secure a better living than he could make in his native country. Before coming over he was for a number of years an officer in the Italian army.

In addition to his street lamp business, Domenico has a fruit and candy store at the corner of Eighteenth and T streets northwest. He has three fine daughters, now almost grown to womanhood, and two sons, one of whom is married. The younger son, Michael, helps his father to light lamps. He is a bright and active boy about twelve years of age. The territory which Domenico has to cover is a large one, extending from Q to T streets, and from Seventeenth street to Sheridan Circle. Domenico and his son light 177 lamps every evening.

Besides himself and his son, Domenico has two nephews, Nicholas Torrillo and Leonardo Gagliardi, and other relatives who are engaged in the same work in this city. Leonardo has just come to Washington, having been a lamplighter in Yonkers, N. Y., for the past five years, ever since he came to this country. He is a little better paid for his work here than he was in Yonkers. Nicholas Torrillo has been assisting since last summer to install the new incandescent Welsbach burners in the lamps throughout the city.

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Three-Fourths Are Italians.

Three-fourths of the lamplighters in the city are sons of sunny Italy, and nearly all of them come from the same city in their native land. In other occupations in which these happy people are engaged, it is also true that those who are doing the same kind of work come from the same district in Italy.

Another man who has been lighting street lamps for a long time is Peter Petrillo, who has made his living in this manner ever since he came to America, nearly twenty years ago. He has been lighting in Washington for about nine years, having been doing this work in and around New York before coming here.

John Bello is another veteran at the business, having been at it for about twenty years, nine of which have been in Washington. He now lights naphtha lamps in Langdon.

Until within about a year ago, the oldest lamplighter in the District was Daniel Ryan, who had been engaged in this work for nearly forty years. Mr. Ryan was over seventy years of age when he finally resigned from his almost life-long occupation because of his age and increasing infirmities.

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Gasolene Introduced in 1895.

The first gasolene lamps were introduced into this city in the summer of 1895. The first of the modern Welsbach burners were put up as an experiment seven or eight years ago. These new lights were placed at first on Sixteenth street, betwen H and Scott circle, and along Massachusetts avenue from Fourteenth street to Dumbarton circle.

At the present time the larger part of the city is lighted by the new incandescent Welsbach burners. Domenico Torrillo was the first lamplighter in Washington to light the Welsbach lamps. The new lighting company began to put them up during the latter part of last summer, and the last of them have just been put in place. Along the main car lines, the city is now lighted by electricity, but the rest of it is lighted either by gas or gasolene lamps.

The alleys in the outlying districts are provided with naphtha lamps.

There are nearly 9,000 street gas lamps in Washington, and about 1,700 naphtha lamps.

There was a time when the streets of Washington were not artificially lighted on moonlight nights. They were lighted according to what was known as a "moonlight schedule." This meant that the company which had the contract was obliged to furnish light on all nights when, according to the calendar, the moon was not scheduled to appear. It frequently happened that the moon did not follow the schedule laid out for it in the old farmer's almanac, and then Washington went dark, unless the foreboding clouds appeared early enough in the day to allow the city to order the streets lit that night. When the company was obliged to provide light which the disobliging moon failed to provide for them, the city paid the company for their excess light. Now the streets are lighted no matter how brightly "Mister Moon" sheds his gentle rays.

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Old "Moonlight Schedule."

The moonlight schedule system of lighting was discontinued on July 1, 1899. The lamplighter now appears regularly every day in the year. In the long days of summer he does not start on his daily round until late in the evening, but in the short days of December he is obliged to begin lighting up a little after 4 o'clock.

Each lamplighter in the city is provided with a three-month schedule, showing the time each week at which he must begin lighting, and also the time at which he must begin extinguishing. The earliest hour at which he begins lighting is 4:16 p. m., and the latest is 7:07, while the earliest hour at which he starts forth in the morning is 3:44, and the latest 6:27. This is the schedule for the gas lighters.

The naphtha lamplighters are obliged to start an hour or so earlier each evening, for it takes them longer to get their lamps lighted. The gas lighters are supposed to finish their lighting in an hour, while it takes the naphtha lighters from two to three hours, according to the distance which they must cover. Each gas lighter has a route which includes a hundred, more or less, lamps, and he receives 35 cents a month for each lamp. The naphtha lighters have about 75 lamps apiece, and receive from 40 to 65 cents for each lamp.

On the outlying country roads, where the lamps are far apart and where each lighter needs a horse and wagon, they receive more than in the city, where the lights are close together.

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Take Entire Care of Lamps.

The lighters are obliged to take entire care of their lamps, working seven days in the week, and cleaning their lamps at least once a week. The gasolene lighters, in addition to cleaning their lamps, must make daily rounds to fill them with oil. Some take their oil around in small push-carts, while others have a horse and wagon.

There are over a hundred lamplighters in the entire District, eighty of whom work for the gas company, and twenty-two for the gasolene company. Their work is inspected, not only by the companies for whom they are working, but also by officials of the District government.

Michael Laverine is superintendent of the naphtha gas lighters. He came to this country from Potenza, Italy, twenty years ago, and has been with street lighting concerns here and elsewhere for fourteen years.

Domenick Perrone, who recently came to this city to start in the lamplighting business, was formerly the foreman of a gang of his countrymen who worked on the railroad, but a number of his men got in the way of passing trains and were killed, and Domenick received the blame for these accidents; so he decided to give up such a dangerous business and become a lamplighter.

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First Lamps Here in 1848.

George Washington was a lad seven years of age when Dr. James Clayton, of England, began his experiments with coal gas; but the East Room of the White House was not lighted by gas until fifty years after Washington had been laid to rest at Mt. Vernon. The first gas lights were introduced into this city in 1848, and burned what was known as "solar gas." This cost $8 per thousand cubic feet, while coal gas was being used in some other cities at a cost of $3.50 per thousand; but the "solar gas" company claimed that their gas was cheaper in the end than the other kind, because it furnished so much superior light, solar meaning "like the sun."

Children's Narrow Escape from Falling Mill Walls

OF THE many tales of hair-breadth escapes that have been told, few are more thrilling than that of two children, Margie and Herman Octon, of Uston, Minn. Not long ago the biggest building in Uston, the great five-story brick flouring mill of the Farmers' Cereal Company, of Uston, was destroyed by fire, the only salvage that appeared to remain from the wreck being the heavy fire wall on the eastern side, a towering mass of brick and mortar, two feet thick, 120 feet long and fifty-two feet high.

The company, the insurance adjusters, and the town building inspector were all of the opinion that the wall was strong enough to use in rebuilding the mill, and preparations for erecting a new mill were begun. One afternoon when a gang of workmen was clearing out the debris, a sudden heavy gust of wind came rushing across the river flats and struck the great cliff-like face of the fire-blackened wall. Some of them looking up saw the wall sway and totter, and some ill-balanced bricks tumbled from the top. As they shouted a warning, a low, grinding noise was heard, and then, with a slow, majestic movement, like a severed monarch of the forest tottering in his fall, the thousands of tons of brick and mortar swung out of the perpendicular, and, breaking within five feet of the ground, swept downward through the air with the resistless force of a Niagara of rock.

Every workman escaped with ease.

But from such of them as were looking backward ever, as they reached safety themselves a cry of horror went up, for away back near the foundations of the wall and moving slowly along in the wake of the men was a little girl, not over five years old. Margie, daughter of Sherman Octon, who a few seconds before had crept through an opening in the wall with the intention of investigating as to what was going on beyond.

Suddenly, with a shout of "Run, Margie, run!" Herman, the little girl's fourteen-year-old brother, a splendidly strong and athletic lad, dashed out of the ranks of spectators and ran like the wind toward the child and the falling wall. Reaching Margie in a few bounds, he swooped her up in his arms and turned again to run to safety.

Herman ran like the wind, but the wall had gained a terrific speed, and it was evident that it would be upon him long before he could get beyond its reach. In a second boy and child passed out of sight under the avalanche of brick and mortar and as the roar of its fall filled the air, and the solid wall crushed into a disorganized mass the entire scene was blotted out by a great cloud of acrid dust.

Then out of this impenetrable fog came to the ears of all the cry of a child, of Margie's voice, followed at once by comforting words from Herman, and, in a moment more, he emerged from the cloud wholly uninjured and carrying his sister in his arms.

The Disappearing of the De Kovens

(Continued from First Page.)

known Washington began to drift across their threshold. It was not long before they were enjoying the acquaintance of the Herbert Wadsworths, Miss Evelyn Walsh, Mme. Hengelmueller, wife of the Austrian ambassador; some of the British embassy crowd, the Countess Marguerite Cassini, Mme. Nelka de Smirnoff, niece of Mrs. Herbert Wadsworth, and, in fact, many members of the diplomatic circle. Mrs. De Koven then began a siege of teas and box parties.

Pretty soon along came Mrs. Hobart Chatfield Chatfield-Taylor from Chicago to help them over the Alps, so to speak. They took up their domicile in Massachusetts avenue.

Society folk here are agreed that Miss Ethel De Koven's debut, in the winter of 1904-5, was not well attended.

One night, after the Chatfield-Taylors had arrived for the campaign, there was a great frou-frouing of silken skirts up the De Koven front steps. Surely, something was doing.

For some time after this evening reception, whenever anyone who was known to have attended, was approached and asked about what had happened, there would ensue a most profound and sullen silence.

Then some one whispered something to somebody; some one giggled, and the word was passed that there had been such a funny party at the De Kovens' on that night! It was hinted that the guests had arrived in fancy costume and that some of the costumes were so unusual as to be startling. All sorts of characters, it was reported, were represented, and not all of them cowled monks, by any means.

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That Symphony Orchestra.

Such a sputtering as this city seldom has heard in musical cliques, followed the dismal failure of De Koven in conducting the Washington Symphony Orchestra concerts. While, it has been asserted, he did not put any of his own money into the enterprise, he succeeded in so interesting a number of wealthy music lovers that they contributed generously to the support of the plan, only to lose heavily in the end.

It has been claimed that "The Cave-Dwellers" of Washington society, as a clever woman dubbed them, meaning thereby the really ultra-exclusive set, whose members are supposed to live largely in the past, never did take up the De Kovens.

Some Odd Jobs Performed By Modern Photographers

THE modern photographer has queer jobs to perform sometimes.

Time was when a photographer was simply a man who sat in his "gallery" and waited for people to come and have their pictures taken; but now the age is one of specialization, and the "assignment" photographer is one of the products of the times.

Making photographs to be used as evidence in divorce cases furnishes a good source of revenue to some photographers. A New York broker in Wall street once came upon a letter addressed to his wife written in language whose warmth could scarcely be misunderstood and signed with another man's name. He took the letter to a photographer, who reproduced the pages with the writing distinctly showing. The husband then replaced the letter in exactly the position that he found it, but said nothing to his wife. He bided his time and brought suit for divorce. The wife was defiant until the husband produced the photograph of the damaging note.

A woman recently had a photographer "take" 200 love letters. When the job was finished she bought the negatives from which the prints had been made and destroyed them in the photographer's presence. The photographer asked no questions. "It was none of my business," he said. "But I am pretty sure she was the woman to whom the letters were addressed. Probably she agreed to give them up for a stipulated amount, but before she handed them over had them copied for future use. Imagine the feelings of the poor man, after comforting himself with the thought that now there is no black and white which can be used against him, to be confronted with the reproductions of his passionate pennings and to be forced to realize that the woman he had grown tired of had a hold on him yet."

Photographs which are to be used as evidence of injuries in damage suits are comparatively common. A photographer's wife and small daughter were crossing Broadway once when they were knocked down by a post-office cart, which had been struck by a street car. They were not seriously hurt, but they had been thrown down in the mud, and the summer dresses which they were wearing were ruined. The husband's studio was nearby and they hurried thither as the nearest place of refuge. As soon as the circumstance was explained, the husband and father posed them in such a manner as would show up the mud with which they were plastered to the best advantage. The photographs were then presented to the street railway company, which readily accepted them as evidence of damage and liberally paid for the dresses ruined.

Society women are the best sources for queer and unusual photographs. Several of them are quite fond of having their collections of jewels taken. A woman once called upon a New York photographer to have her portrait taken. To his amazement, when she lifted her veil he saw that her face was covered with spots and scars. He rather wondered at her desire to have pictured such a face as this, until he learned that her photo was to be used as evidence in a suit against a beauty specialist who had treated her.

Some society women are fond of having their more prominent charms photographed. Requests for pictures of their hands are quite common, and one woman had a photo taken of her bare feet, of which she was very proud. Society women who are proud of the shapeliness of their limbs are occasional customers. Photos of the foot and leg, encased in silk stocking, are sometimes ordered. There are well-known society women, too, who are quite fond of posing in classical but scant costumes.

One of the hardest jobs he ever had, according to one camera expert, was given him by a society matron of more than ample proportions, who wanted a photograph of herself made for her son, who was out West, and had not seen her for some years. She particularly insisted that her adipose figure should be trimmed down to graceful girlish lines and that her face should be represented without a wrinkle. It gave the photographer several days of hard work in retouching, but at last he succeeded in making the picture present a svelte, lithe creature without a semblance to the original. But the plethoric old dame was immensely pleased and went away secure in the belief that her son would be, too.

Sometimes an order that a camera man gets suggests a whole life story. One photographer tells a story of being sent for to go to a certain man's home. On reaching his room he found a theatrical costumer busily engaged in "making up" his customer to represent Lear. The transformation completed, Lear had himself photographed six times in his own garden, and ordered the finished prints to be sent to an adress in another town. Half an hour after the photographer had returned to his office he learned that his customer had just committed suicide.